

Michigan's Transition to Postsecondary Education and the Workplace



VIII. Compendium of Activities for Bridge Programs

**Workforce Development Agency State of Michigan
Education and Career Readiness
Office of Adult Education**

Executive Summary

Each year, thousands of adult learners pass the GED® test and earn a GED® credential. Unfortunately, passing the GED® test does not enable many of these students to immediately begin work toward their ultimate goal –successful entrance into a postsecondary education or training program and the career of their choice. Instead, many GED® graduates must first complete extensive remediation prior to enrollment in credit-granting courses or settle for positions that do not meet their career goals.



Many adult learners enter programs thinking that they can obtain the skills necessary to pass the GED® test within a very short time frame. This requirement for immediacy is often reflected by students settling for a minimal passing score on the GED® test, believing that it is all they need to pursue their long-term career and educational goals. However, a minimal score does not mean that a GED® graduate is ready for a degree-granting course of study or today’s workforce. There are many “missing pieces” that result in a gap between a GED® credential obtained through a minimal passing score and the skills necessary for success in the 21st century.

To bridge the gap, GED® programs need to provide:

- ❖ A curriculum that incorporates the higher-order thinking skills identified by the GED® 2002 Series Test, rather than the basic skills of ABE (Adult Basic Education) programs
- ❖ A wide range of instructional strategies to ensure students are prepared for the GED® test, as well as career- and college-placement tests.
- ❖ A focus on helping students “learn to learn” as well as the ability to understand and use higher- order critical thinking skills.
- ❖ More specific counseling and support for students as they develop attainable goals and work to achieve those goals.
- ❖ Homework and other out-of-class assignments completed by students.

There are many different strategies and activities to incorporate into the GED® classroom that will assist students in becoming more effective lifelong learners. Some beginning activities and strategies are included in this compendium. These should be used in addition to the materials provided in toolkits **IV. Transition Syllabi and Lesson Plans** and **V. Transition Compendium**.

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Critical Thinking Skills



Critical thinking includes a complex combination of skills. Research has found that the more often a student is exposed to critical thinking, the greater the probability that the student will transfer critical thinking to other areas of his or her life. Based on this research, it is important to expose students to critical thinking in education wherever possible.

Designing critical thinking into academic lessons not only helps students transfer critical thinking skills to other areas of their lives, it improves the effectiveness of the lessons. Critical thinking requires deeper analysis of the lesson. Deeper analysis produces deeper understanding, resulting in better grades and higher test scores. Critical thinking empowers students to be independent, innovative, and helps them succeed in school and in life.

When implementing critical thinking skill instruction, it is important for students to understand the thinking level of the task or question so that they can fully understand what is being asked. In 1956, Benjamin Bloom created a thinking taxonomy for categorizing the level of abstraction of questions that commonly occur in the classroom. During the 1990s, Lorin Anderson, a former student of Benjamin Bloom, revisited the taxonomy. As a result of the investigation, a number of significant improvements were made to the existing structure. First, there was a change in terminology. The names of the six major categories were changed from *noun* to *verb* forms. The reasoning behind this is that the taxonomy reflects different forms of thinking and thinking is an *active* process. Verbs describe actions, not nouns, hence the change.

Anderson also created a change in structure. The major categories were ordered in terms of increased complexity. As a result, the order of synthesis (create) and evaluation (evaluate) were interchanged. The idea is that one can be critical without being creative.

The primary focus of Anderson's Taxonomy is in use. The revised taxonomy is more universal and deemed to be applicable at all levels of organization.

Overview of Taxonomies: Bloom versus Anderson

Bloom's Original Taxonomy	Anderson's Revised Taxonomy
Knowledge	Remembering
Comprehension	Understanding
Application	Applying
Analysis	Analyzing
Synthesis	Evaluating
Evaluation	Creating

Regardless of which taxonomy is used, the integration of different cognitive level questions is necessary for the development of critical thinking skills. The following are sample question starters to use within the GED® classroom, as well as sample activities and products for each level of both Bloom's and Anderson's Taxonomy.

Question Starters and Activities for Bloom's Taxonomy

The following chart provides an overview of the types of materials and/or situations that teachers can use at each of the six levels of Bloom's critical thinking taxonomy, as well as measurable behaviors that can and should be demonstrated at each level.

Bloom's Level	Question Starters	Materials / Situations	Measurable Behaviors
Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recall facts, definitions, vocabulary Identify Describe and enumerate Lists, matches and names Records and reproduces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is...? Where is ...? How would you show...? When did ... happen? Can you recall...? 	Events, people, newspapers, magazine articles, definitions, videos, dramas, textbooks, films, television programs, recordings, media presentations	Define, describe, memorize, label, recognize, name, draw, state, identify, select, write, locate, recite
Comprehension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain Infer and generalize Give examples Order steps in a process Read charts and graphs Identify relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would you classify the type of ...? How would you rephrase the meaning of...? What is the main idea of ...? Which statements support...? How would you summarize...? 	Speech, story, drama, cartoon, diagram, graph, summary, outline, analogy, poster, bulletin board	Summarize, restate, paraphrase, illustrate, match, explain, defend, relate, infer, compare, contrast, generalize
Application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solve a problem Demonstrates Modify based on information Implements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What examples can you find to...? What approach would you use to...? What would happen if...? 	Diagram, puzzle, sculpture, illustration, dramatization, forecast, problem, organizations, classifications, rules, systems, routines	Apply, change, put together, construct, discover, produce, make, report, sketch, solve, show, collect, prepare

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What other way would you plan to...? • What elements would you choose to change...? 		
Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast • Distinguish from other similar ideas • Judge completeness • Recognize relevance and irrelevance • Recognize fact or fiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the parts or features of...? • How is _____ related to...? • What conclusions can you draw...? • What evidence can you find...? • What is the relationship between...? 	Survey, questionnaire, an argument, a model, displays, demonstrations, diagrams, systems, conclusions, reports, graphed information	Examine, classify, categorize, research, contrast, compare, disassemble, differentiate, separate, investigate, subdivide
Synthesis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a hypothesis • Develop alternatives • Combines or reorganizes • Communicate ideas ▪ Draw conclusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What changes would you make to...? • How would you improve...? • What could be combined to change...? • Suppose you could _____ what would you do...? • Can you predict the outcome if...? 	Experiment, game, song, report, poem, prose, speculation, creation, art, invention, drama, rules	Combine, hypothesize, construct, originate, create, design, formulate, role-play, develop
Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judge the accuracy of information • Critique/appraise • Reframes • Develop criteria • Identify values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your opinion of...? • Would it be better if...? • How would you rate...? • What judgment would you make about...? • Based on what you know, how would you...? 	Recommendations, self-evaluations, group discussions, debate, court trial, standards, editorials, values	Compare, recommend, assess, value, apprise, solve, criticize, weigh, consider, debate

Question Starters and Activities for Anderson's Taxonomy

The following chart provides an overview of the types of materials and/or situations that teachers can use at each of the six levels Anderson's critical thinking taxonomy, as well as measurable behaviors that can and should be demonstrated at each level.

Anderson's Level	Question Starters	Sample Activities and Products
<p>Remembering <i>Recognize, list, describe, identify retrieve, name</i></p> <p>Can the student RECALL information?</p>	<p>What happened after...? How many...? What is...? Who was it that...? Can you name ...? Find the meaning of... Describe what happened after... Who spoke to...? Which is true or false...? Identify who.... Name all the.....</p>	<p>Make a list of the main events of the story. Make a time line of events. Make a facts chart . Write a list of any pieces of information you can remember. What animals were in the story. Make a chart showing... Make an acrostic. Recite a poem.</p>
<p>Understanding <i>Interpret, exemplify, summarize, infer, paraphrase</i></p> <p>Can the student EXPLAIN ideas or concepts?</p>	<p>Can you write in your own words? How would you explain...? Can you write a brief outline...? What do you think could have happened next...? Who do you think...? What was the main idea...? Clarify why.... Illustrate the Does everyone act in the way that does? Draw a story map. Explain why a character acted in the way that they did.</p>	<p>Cut out, or draw pictures to show a particular event. Illustrate what you think the main idea may have been. Make a cartoon strip showing the sequence of events. Write and perform a play based on the story. Retell the story in your own words. Write a summary report of the event. Prepare a flow chart to illustrate the sequence of events.</p>
<p>Applying <i>Implement, carry out, use ...</i></p> <p>Can the student USE the new knowledge in another familiar situation?</p>	<p>Can you write in your own words? How would you explain...? Can you write a brief outline...? What do you think could have happened next...? Who do you think...? What was the main idea...? Clarify why.... Illustrate the Does everyone act in the way that does? Draw a story map. Explain why a character acted in the way that they did.</p>	<p>Construct a model to demonstrate how it works Make a diorama to illustrate an event Make a scrapbook about the areas of study. Make a papier-mâché map / clay model to include relevant information about an event. Take a collection of photographs to demonstrate a particular point. Make up a puzzle game. Write a textbook about this topic for others.</p>
<p>Analyzing <i>Compare, attribute, organize, deconstruct ...</i></p> <p>Can the student DIFFERENTIATE between constituent parts?</p>	<p>Which events could not have happened? If. ..happened, what might the ending have been? How is...similar to...? What do you see as other possible outcomes?</p>	<p>Design a questionnaire to gather information. Write a commercial to sell a new product Make flow chart to show the critical stages. Construct a graph to illustrate selected</p>

	<p>Why did...changes occur? Can you explain what must have happened when...? What are some or the problems of...? Can you distinguish between...? What were some of the motives behind..? What was the turning point? What was the problem with...?</p>	<p>information. Make a family tree showing relationships. Devise a play about the study area. Write a biography of a person studied. Prepare a report about the area of study.</p>
<p>Evaluating <i>Check, critique, judge hypothesize ...</i></p> <p>Can the student JUSTIFY a decision or course of action?</p>	<p>Is there a better solution to...? Judge the value of... What do you think about...? Can you defend your position about...? Do you think...is a good or bad thing? How would you have handled...? What changes to.. would you recommend? Do you believe...? How would you feel if. ...? How effective are. ...?</p>	<p>Conduct a debate about an issue of special interest. Make a booklet about five rules you see as important. Convince others. Form a panel to discuss views. Write a letter to. ..advising on changes needed. Write a half-year report. Prepare a case to present your view about...</p>
<p>Creating <i>Design, construct, plan,</i></p>	<p>Can you design a...to...? Can you see a possible solution to...? If you had access to all resources, how would you deal with...? Why don't you devise your own way to...? What would happen if ...? How many ways can you...? Can you create new and unusual uses for...? Can you develop a proposal which would...?</p>	<p>Invent a machine to do a specific task. Design a building to house your study. Create a new product. Give it a name and plan a marketing campaign. Write about your feelings in relation to... Write a TV show play, puppet show, role play, song <i>or</i> pantomime about.. Design a record, book or magazine cover for... Sell an idea Devise a way to...</p>

Bloom's Critical Thinking Questioning Strategies.

http://www.kyrene.org/schools/brisas/sunda/litpack/BloomsCriticalThinking_files/v3_document.htm

Critical Thinking on the Web. <http://austhink.com/critical/>

Critical Thinking Skills. <http://www.elizabethstps.vic.edu.au/anderson.htm>

Paul, Richard and Elder, Linda. *The miniature guide to critical thinking. (2006). The Foundation for Critical Thinking.* http://www.criticalthinking.org/files/Concepts_Tools.pdf

The Critical Thinking Community: Strategy List: 35 Dimensions of Critical Thought.

<http://www.criticalthinking.org/resources/k12/TRK12-strategy-list.cfm>

Reading Skills

Analysis of Poetry

Strategy – Analyzing a Poem in Four Paragraphs

- First — Mention the title and the author.
 - Who is the speaker?
 - To whom is he/she speaking?
 - What is the setting?
 - What is the speaker talking about?
 - What is the purpose?
 - to narrate a story?
 - to reveal character?
 - to depict a scene?
 - to express a mood or emotion?
 - to consider and judge some idea?
 - What is the mood, tone, or feeling of the poem?
- Paraphrase the poem.
 - Tell what it says in your own words.
 - Use lines from the poem to help show what is happening.
 - Look up any unknown words in a dictionary.
- Comment on the structure of the poem.
 - Explain the use of stanzas.
 - Is the poem a sonnet or another format?
 - What other regular structures can you see at work?
- What particular language does the poet use?
 - How does the language appeal to the sense of sight, hearing, touch, taste, or smell?
 - Examine images and figures of speech; for example, notice what color words or sounds repeat.
 - Examine diction. Does the poet use slang or dialect?
 - Show how key words contribute to the meaning.
- Conclusion statement.
 - State the theme of the poem.
 - State your personal reaction to the poem.



Idaho State University Online Handouts. Retrieved from the World Wide Web at:
<http://www.isu.edu/departments/ctl/writing/handouts/poetry.html>.

Sample Poetry Selections to Use in the GED® Classroom

College Bound Reading List

Compiled by Arrowhead Library System

<http://als.lib.wi.us/Collegebound.html>

Angelou, Maya. *And Still I Rise*

Poems reflecting themes from her autobiography.

Brooks, Gwendolyn. *Selected Poems*

Poetry focusing on the lives of African American residents of Northern urban ghettos,

Cummings, E.E. *Complete Poems, 1904-1962*

Prepared directly from the original manuscripts, preserving the original typography and format.

Dickinson, Emily. *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*

A chronological arrangement of all known Dickinson poems and fragments.

Donne, John. *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*

Poems distinguished by wit, profundity of thought, passion and subtlety.

Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land*

A poem of despair by one of the most important modern poets in English.

Frost, Robert. *The Poetry of Robert Frost*

Collected works reflecting both flashing insight and practical wisdom.

Ginsberg, Allen. *Howl and Other Poems*

Works from the leading poet of the so-called "beat generation."

Giovanni, Nikki. *My House*

The poems in this collection deal with love, family, nature, friends, music, aloneness, blackness, and Africa.

Hughes, Langston. *Selected Poems*

Poems selected by Hughes shortly before his death in 1967, representing work from his entire career.

Keats, John. *Complete Poems*

Among the greatest odes in English, written by a genius who died young.

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. *The Poetical Works of Longfellow*
Includes "The Song of Hiawatha" and "The Courtship of Miles Standish."

Sandburg, Carl. *Complete Poems*
Sandburg celebrates industrial and agricultural America and the common people.

Thomas, Dylan. *Poems of Dylan Thomas*
Poetry by a "word magician" with a powerful imagination.

Williams, William Carlos. *Selected Poems*
Williams' poetry is firmly rooted in the commonplace details of American life.

Wordsworth, William. *Poems*
Poetry revealing the extraordinary beauty and significance of simple things.

Yeats, William Butler. *The Poems*
Leading poet of the Irish Renaissance.

Comprehension Ideas

There are a wide range of strategies that students can use to improve their comprehension skills. The following are two different types of logs that students can complete to indicate comprehension of a specific text that has been read.

About Point

About Point is a comprehension strategy where students identify the main idea and major points of a passage. Students should have experiences in finding and rewording the main idea and supporting ideas before using this type of form to improve comprehension skills. This is an important comprehension strategy to use when you need students to have the major point in a passage prior to continuing to read for clearer meaning.

About Point Activity Sheet

Read the material that your teacher has assigned. Then decide what the passage is **About** and what details or **Points** support your answer to complete the **About Point Activity Sheet**.

This reading is **ABOUT**

and the **POINTS** are

Reading Log

Reading logs can be used by students to identify important information from text that is read, as well as providing an opinion about the reading material.

Reading Log

Name: _____ Date: _____

Document Name (i.e., newspaper, magazine, brochure, etc.) _____

Title: _____

Author (if noted): _____

Main Idea: _____

Supporting Details (include only one to three details):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

One thing I agreed with in the reading selection.

One thing I disagreed with in the reading selection.

Vocabulary Ideas

Understanding the diverse vocabulary of social studies, science, and mathematics is extremely important to the comprehension of text and word problems. The following activities assist students in activating background knowledge, as well as improving their vocabulary skills.

ABC Brainstorm

ABC Brainstorm asks students to come up with a word about a specified topic for each letter of the alphabet. This technique can be used prior to the beginning of the actual lesson or reading to assess a student's current knowledge or as a quick end of the lesson assessment tool.

ABC Brainstorm

Topic _____

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

U

V

W

X

Y

Z

Summary Paragraph

KWHL

Another technique is KWHL. The first column is completed prior to the lesson being taught. A student is asked to list what he/she knows about a topic. Next, the student writes in what he/she would like to know about the topic from the lesson, and finally, after the lesson is completed, the student writes down what he/she has learned.

KWHL

What I Know for Sure About This Topic	What I Think I Know, But Am Not Sure About This Topic	What I would Like to Learn About This Topic	Connections Between This Topic and Other Things I Know

Before and After Vocabulary Grids

Give each student a list of key words with two blank columns. In the first column, the students write the meaning of each word or what they guess the meaning is for each word. As they come across the word later during the lesson, the students can revise their original definition. At this point, the answers can be discussed and clarified in the whole class.

The benefits of Before and After Vocabulary Grids are that they:

- Focus attention onto key words
- Provide opportunities for students to actively work out word meaning
- Help students become independent learners of new words by using strategies such as context clues

Before and After Vocabulary Grid Template

Word List	What I think the word means	Revised definition

Building Word Lists

Locate lists of words from each of the areas that you will be teaching. You may also wish to have students build their own word lists by having students write unfamiliar terms on a chart that is posted in the room. In mathematics, you may wish to have students add symbols to their definitions.

Find the Words

Provide students with specific letters of the alphabet. Tell them that their task is to create as many words as possible with the letters provided in the area in which they are studying. If challenged, students should be prepared to state how the word is related to the selected topic.

Science Vocabulary Example

Provide a group of students with the letters: a, c, e, h, j, i, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u. Have them come up with as many vocabulary words in the area of the solar system as possible from the list of letters provided. Remember, they cannot use other letters, but they can repeat letters within words as often as necessary. If challenged, they should be prepared to state how the word is related to the solar system.

Sample Words: solar, planet, sun, star, Jupiter, Uranus, Saturn, Mars, Pluto, earth, moon.

Social Studies Vocabulary Example

Provide a group of students with the letters: a, c, d, e, g, h, j, i, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u. Have them come up with as many vocabulary words in the area of the geography as possible from the list of letters provided. Remember, they cannot use other letters, but they can repeat letters within words as often as necessary. If challenged, they should be prepared to state how the word is related to the solar system.

Sample words: map, compass rose, hemisphere, latitude, longitude.

The Narrative Chain

A narrative chain requires that students link words in a list together into a sentence or paragraph. By using the words and associating them they create a firmer connection between the new words and those already stored in their memory.

Science Narrative Chain Example

Provide students with the words: temperatures, southern, glacier, earth, tropical, rainforest, jungle, ice cap, moderate

A sample narrative chain might be as follows:

Although some of the places on the earth experience moderate temperature changes throughout the year, there are also areas where the temperatures are quite drastic. In some of the southern regions, one might experience a tropical rainforest or jungle-like atmosphere which is very hot and humid. Some parts of the earth are very cold all year long and are composed of glaciers or ice caps.

Social Studies Narrative Chain Example

Provide students with the words: election, veto, amendment, congress, president, checks and balances

A sample narrative chain might be as follows:

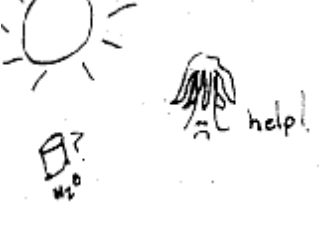
After the election, the President expected that he would be able to recommend amendments to several bills that were being considered by Congress. However, he did not like the final version of the bills and used his veto power, an example of checks and balances included in the constitution, to prevent them from becoming law.

K. I. M. (Key Idea – Information - Memory Clue)

K. I. M. is a great strategy for new words or concepts. Write the term or key idea (K) in the left column, the information (I) that goes along with it in the center column, and draw a picture of the idea, a memory clue, (M) in the right column.

The key idea may be a new vocabulary word or a new concept. The information may be a definition or it may be a more technical explanation of the concept. The memory clue is a way

for students to fully integrate the meaning of the key idea into their memories. By making a simple sketch that explains the key idea, students synthesize and interpret the new information, making it their own. Then, students can reference their drawings to easily remember new key ideas.

K (Key Idea)	I (Information)	M (Memory Clue)
drought	Little or no rain over a period of time	

Presentation Skills



Classroom Presentations and/or Speeches

Students in GED® programs often do not have the opportunity to give oral presentations since it is not part of the GED® test. However, oral presentations are an important part of many college classes and the real world of work. Public speaking can be difficult for many students. It's the reason that opportunities should be provided to students while in the GED® program.

Strategy – 7 P Approach to Public Speaking

The following is a **7 P** approach to public speaking. Students may find these ideas helpful as they develop their presentation.

- **Purpose:** Why are you speaking? What do you want audience members to know, think, believe, or do as a result of your presentation?
- **People:** Who is your audience? How do the characteristics, skills, opinions, and behaviors of your audience affect your purpose?
- **Place:** Why are you speaking to this group now and in this place? How can you plan and adapt to the logistics of this place. How can you use visual aids to help you achieve your purpose?
- **Preparation:** Where and how can you find good ideas and information for your speech? How much and what kind of supporting materials do you need?
- **Planning:** Is there a natural order to the ideas and information you will use? What are the most effective ways to organize your speech in order to adapt it to the purpose, people, place, etc.?
- **Personality:** How do you become associated with your message in a positive way? What can you do to demonstrate your competence, charisma, and character to the audience?
- **Performance:** What form of delivery is best suited to the purpose of your speech? What delivery techniques will make your presentation more effective? How should you practice?

Engleberg, Isa N. *The principles of public presentation* (1994). Harper Collins: New York.

Unlike a conversation or a written document, an oral presentation is a one-shot attempt to make a point. By contrast, a conversation consists of repetitions and clarifications based on questions and immediate feedback, while a written paper allows a reader to puzzle through its contents as often as necessary. It is essential that students learn that oral presentations must be well-constructed and logical.

Teach students how to use a presentation outline. Most students will see similarities between developing a writing project and oral presentation.

A Presentation Outline

Introduction

- What? – overview of presentation (use visual aids if necessary)
- Why? – purpose of presentation and why subject is important
- How? – format you will use; what can the audience expect to see and learn
- Who? – if more than one person, provide introductions and indicate roles - don't expect an audience to memorize these

Body

The following is a list of formats for presenting information. Select one or more of the formats that you will use in your presentation.

- Rhetorical - questions and answers
- Logical progression - indicate steps, such as: A then B then C
- Time series - order information from beginning to end, earlier to later, and so on
- Compare and contrast - use same structure to compare different events, individuals, or situations
- Problems and solutions; don't present problems without working toward some recommended action
- Simple to complex - use successive building blocks to communicate complex processes or concepts
- Deductive reasoning - moving from general principles or values to specific applications or examples
- Inductive reasoning - from specific applications/examples to reach general principles or conclusions

Conclusion

- Review, highlight and emphasize - key points, benefits, recommendations
- Draw conclusions - Where are we? What does all of this mean? What's the next step?

Important Elements in Oral Presentations

Once students have completed the basics of their presentation, assist them in keeping the following elements in mind for a more effective speech.

- **Rate:** The optimal rate for an informational talk is about 100 words per minute. Any faster and the audience can't absorb the additional information. Assist students in using pauses and repeating critical information.
- **Opening:** The opening should catch the interest and attention of the audience immediately. However, students should avoid trite filler phrases or technical jargon.
- **Transitions:** The link between successive elements of the talk should be planned carefully, smooth, and logical. Make sure that students understand how to effectively use transition words.
- **Conclusion:** Students may wish to signal that they are concluding their presentation by using the words "In summary, . . ." Summaries help the listener achieve a high retention of the information, so it's important to carefully draft summary statements.
- **Practice Makes Perfect:** Practice is the single most important factor contributing to a good presentation. Have students practice their presentations by giving them to other students, recording their presentations, practicing their presentations in a mirror, etc. One rule of thumb is that individuals should complete a minimum of ten practice runs for any one presentation.



College Preparation Skills

Note Taking Skills

Effective note taking is an important skill for students to possess as they look towards college- and career-readiness. From taking notes in class to taking notes in a meeting at work, being able to document important information for future review is a skill that needs to be practiced and taught.



Becoming an effective and efficient note-taker requires time and practice. The following strategies and recommendations should be reviewed with students to provide them with tips and techniques they can use to become better note takers.

Students should:

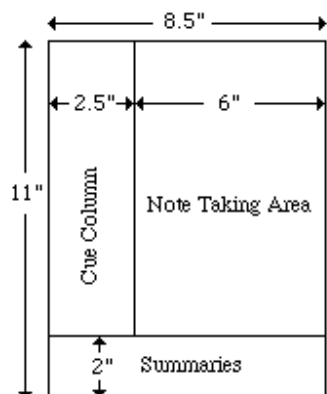
- Prepare before going to class by reviewing material from the textbook to become familiar with the terms, images, and other material that will be covered.
- Go to class and not depend on someone else's notes. Someone else won't have the same background knowledge or experience about a topic or might not be looking and listening for the same types of information.
- Remember that the physical act of writing notes can help reinforce learning.
- Listen actively and if possible think before writing anything down, but be careful to not fall behind the speaker.
- Raise questions when appropriate for clarification.
- Not try to write down everything. Notes are for the key points and specific details. Students who try to write down everything aren't really listening. They are too busy writing to pay attention.
- Listen for cues that the instructor uses to signal important points.
- Listen for repeated information. Instructors will often repeat information that has special significance.
- Write down the major points and supporting details.
- Write legibly even if the notes will be rewritten later. If the writing is illegible, then the student may be unable to read his/her own writing.
- Develop a personal shorthand or abbreviation system for taking notes.
- Write bulleted items, not complete sentences.
- Always date notes and use headings to remember when the notes were taken and the content covered.
- Keep notes and other handouts in a binder or folder that is dedicated to that class.
- Use a tape recorder only if it assists with learning and one's personal learning style. Taping a lecture or presentation can be useful, but it can also create double the work.
- Review notes immediately after class and add or delete information as needed.

The Cornell Note Taking System

One of the most popular graphic organizers for note taking is a system developed by Cornell University. First have students use a template like the one provided or have them use a large, loose-leaf notebook. If they are using notebook paper, have them draw a vertical line 2 ½ inches from the left side of the paper. This is called the recall column. Notes should be taken to the right of the margin. Students should record as many facts and general ideas as they can.

During the lecture, students should record notes by capturing general ideas.

After the lecture, students should read through their notes and make them more legible if necessary. Students should then identify basic ideas or key words which provide the general idea of the lecture. This reduction of the lesson is written in the right hand column.



Note Taking Area: Record lecture as fully and as meaningfully as possible.

Cue Column: As you're taking notes, keep cue column empty. Soon after the lecture, reduce your notes to concise jottings as clues for Reciting, Reviewing, and Reflecting.

Summaries: Sum up each page of your notes in a sentence or two.

Cornell Notes provides the perfect format for following through with the **5 Rs** of note taking:

Record - During the lecture, the student records information in the main column including meaningful facts, main ideas, and support details.

Reduce - As soon as possible, the student should summarize these facts and ideas concisely in the Cue Column. Summarizing clarifies meanings and relationships, reinforces continuity, and strengthens memory.

Recite - The student should cover the Note Taking Area and use only the notes from the Cue Column to say the facts and ideas of the lecture as fully as possible, not mechanically, but in his/her own words and then verify what has been said by checking the information from the Note Taking Area.

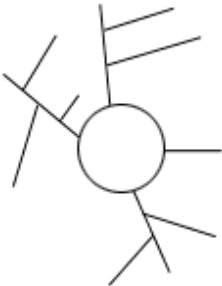
Reflect - The student should develop opinions from the notes and use them as a starting point for personal reflection on the course and how it relates to other courses, background knowledge, or personal experiences. Reflection helps prevent ideas from being forgotten.

Review - Each student should spend at least 10 minutes every week in quick review of the notes in order to retain what has been learned.

Sample of Cornell Notes

Subject: Cornell Notes

Date: _____

Main Ideas	Details
<p>Cornell Notes</p> <p>Semantic map or web</p> 	<p><i>Can be used to provide an outline of the course, chapter, or lecture.</i></p> <p><i>Organized by main ideas and details.</i></p> <p><i>Can be as detailed as necessary.</i></p> <p><i>Sequential-- take notes as they are given by instructor or text in an orderly fashion.</i></p> <p><i>After class, write a summary of what you learned to clarify and reinforce learning and to assist retention.</i></p> <p><i>Can be used as study tool.</i></p> <p><i>Define terms or explain concepts listed on the left side.</i></p> <p><i>Identify the concept or term based on its definition on the right side.</i></p> <p><i>Can be used to provide a "big picture" of the course, chapter, or lecture.</i></p> <p><i>Organized by main ideas and sub-topics.</i></p> <p><i>Limited in how much detail you can represent.</i></p> <p><i>Simultaneous - you can use this method for instructors who jump around from topic to topic.</i></p> <p><i>After class, you will probably need to "translate" notes into a Cornell format.</i></p> <p><i>Can be used as a study tool -- to get a quick overview and to determine whether you need more information or need to concentrate your study on specific topics.</i></p>
<p>Summary:</p> <p><i>There are a couple of ways that you can take notes. The Cornell method is best when the information is given in a sequential, orderly fashion and allows for more detail. The semantic web/map method works best for instructors who skip around from topic to topic. The map provides a "big picture" when you're previewing materials or getting ready to study for a test.</i></p>	

Cornell Notes Template with Sample Questions	
Name	Date
Topic	Class/Subject
Main Ideas	Details
<p>Connections or Main Ideas Column</p> <p>Write in this column one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Categories • Questions • Vocabulary Words • Review • Connections • Reminders 	<p>Details Column - Write down only important information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bold, underlined, or italicized words • Information in boxes • Headers or sub-headers on the page • Information the book or teacher repeats • Words, ideas, or events you think might be on a test • Quotes, examples, or details you might want to use later
<p>Leave room for future thoughts</p>	
<p>In this box, write either a summary of what you read or heard, key points, or questions you still need to have answered.</p>	

Cornell Notes Template	
Name	Date
Topic	Class/Subject
Main Ideas	Details
Personal Thoughts, Observations, and Questions	
Summary	

Strategy - Double-Entry Diaries

Double-Entry Diaries are an excellent option for students when they are reading materials that cannot be marked, such as textbooks or class sets of books.

Introduce Double-Entry Diaries by asking students to divide a sheet of paper into two vertical columns by folding it lengthwise in half. The left side of the paper is for specific information from a text, such as a short passage, factual information, or a summary. The right column provides students with space to provide written responses to the text material that they have selected on the left side. This technique provides students with both factual material and their own reactions to that material.

An example would be that a teacher could record a passage or statement from the newspaper, such as the number of deaths from the war in Iraq. The teacher would then model what he/she thinks about this statement and how it connects to what he/she may know about past conflicts or the area that is described.

This technique helps students to better understand what they have read and connect it to what they know. To better help students in describing this information in the right column, the teacher may wish to have students label the right hand column:

- This reminds me of . . . (Supports background knowledge)
- I wonder . . . (Supports questioning skills)
- I think . . . (Supports making inferences)
- I am confused because . . . (Supports clarification)
- I would describe the picture I see in my head as . . . (Supports visualization)
- This is important because . . . (Supports importance of certain information)

With practice, this strategy can help students who are struggling with challenging text or as a study technique to review for exams.

Double Entry Diary

Name _____

Topic _____ Date _____

Direct quote with page number or section title	My thoughts on this . . .

Critical Thinking Skills Required for College Tests

In college classes, students are expected to be actively engaged in the learning process. College instructors tie material to higher-order thinking skills through the use of behavioral verbs. They use words such as paraphrase, generalize, classify, hypothesize, formulate, assess, and apprise. Each of these words refers to a different cognitive skill. Students should be aware of these terms so they recognize what they are being called on to do.

Students in college classes have more opportunities to interact with their instructor and their peers. They may be involved in classroom discussions or debates where they have to prepare and deliver oral arguments about specific topics. They must be able to use both inductive and deductive reasoning. Each of these forms of reasoning requires students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information.



General Test-Taking Strategies

Whether taking subjective, objective, or standardized test, there are several strategies that students can use to help alleviate anxiety and produce better outcomes. Provide students with the following information:

Dump information – Information dumping refers to quickly writing down all of the information that a student is afraid he/she will forget during the test. Immediately write down all the facts, figures, statistics, etc., on the back of the test or on scratch paper as soon as the test begins so you do not have to worry about forgetting something that will be needed later in the test.

Read the directions – More students do poorly on a test for which they are well-prepared because they fail to read and follow the directions. Pay close attention to what the question is asking you to do. You may wish to underline areas that appear complicated. Also, understand the manner in which the instructor wishes questions to be answered. Not following directions can result in losing points.

Scan the test – After reading the directions, scan the entire test before starting to answer any questions. Look at the types of questions included and the point value for each question (if provided). Make a note of the easy parts and those that are more difficult.

Develop a plan – After scanning the test, decide how to approach the test and how much time should be budgeted for each part. If questions have different point values, tackle the higher points first and leave the lower points for later in the test. Start with the questions that cover material with the greatest comfort level. Include ample time to review answers and make revisions as needed.

Read the questions carefully – Review sample questions when provided to see how the remaining questions should be answered. This is especially important on standardized tests.

Break down complex questions into easier parts and attack each part separately. Then combine everything into the final answer. Don't look for hidden meaning or assume that the instructor is trying to trick you.

Make educated guesses – Skip questions that are too difficult and come back to them later. If points are subtracted for missed questions, consider carefully before guessing at an answer. It might be better to leave the question blank than to lose points for a wrong answer. If only correct questions are counted, then guess if you are not sure of the answer. Look for word clues to help eliminate at least some of the responses in a multiple-choice question.

Avoid careless errors – Read the directions and reread the questions for a clear understanding of what is expected. Double check the answers after completing the test. Reread short-answer questions or essay responses to make sure that they are clear, concise, and easy to understand. Double check math calculations. If permitted, use a calculator to check math calculations. Make sure answers are in the right place especially if items were skipped at various locations throughout the test.

Adapted from Learning Strategies Database, Test-Taking Strategies, Muskingum College Center for Advancement and Learning (CAL). Retrieved from the World Wide at: <http://www.muskingum.edu/~cal/database/general/testtaking.html>.

Using Note Cards to Prepare for Tests

Many students like to use note cards to help them prepare for a test.

Note cards can:

- Make the student a more active learner
- Require the student to initiate the process of asking what is important and how is it related to what should be learned
- Help the student identify the main ideas, important details and facts, and definitions
- Help the student predict questions that may be included on the test
- Be used when the student has a few minutes to spare because they are small and easy to carry around
- Allow for the continued repetition of the information



Deciding what to include on a note card is the most difficult part. To develop note cards, students should:

- Use 3 x 5 cards in most cases although the student can use 4 x 6 if needed
- Write the word, main idea, topic, rule or whatever is to be learned on the blank side of the card
- Write the definition, supporting details, facts, dates, or process to be learned on the lined side of the card
- The following chart provides examples of different types of note cards. Distribute this chart to students as a guide for them to use when setting up their own note cards.

Sample Note Card Templates

Blank (Front) Side	Type of Card	Lined (Flip) Side
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>Scalawag</p> </div>	<p>Definition Note Card</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p>Dishonest southern politicians who were out to enrich themselves by swearing that they had not borne arms against the U.S. during the Civil War</p> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p>List the 3 branches of the government</p> </div>	<p>Listing Note Card</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>Executive</p> <p>Legislative</p> <p>Judicial</p> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p>Why did the US not join the League of Nations?</p> </div>	<p>Fact Question Note Card</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p>Many Americans opposed the idea of getting involved with the affairs of foreign countries. They felt that such a course could lead to war.</p> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p>Explain the role of the U.S. President.</p> </div>	<p>Essay Question Note Card</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commander & Chief of the Armed Forces 2. Makes treaties 3. Chooses foreign representatives 4. Appoints Supreme Court judges 5. Sees that laws are carried out 6. Vetoes acts of legislation </div>

Handout developed by Dr. Richard Oliver, Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC) San Antonio College. Retrieved from the World Wide Web at:

http://www.accd.edu/sac/slac/handouts/StudyAids/sskills_aid_7.htm.

Using Chapter Reviews to Prepare for Tests

Students should use chapter reviews to prepare for tests. This will give them an opportunity to identify questions that they may have about the content so that they can then ask their instructor. Chapter reviews often include key terms that students can define and keep for future study material. Some books may also include reviews in the middle of a chapter which allows students to check their understanding of the material up to that point.

Linking New Knowledge with Experience

Students have a rich array of life experiences that can be used to learn new knowledge. Adult students exhibit better reading skills when reading familiar texts. However, even with unfamiliar texts, students often have real-life experiences or background knowledge regarding the topic. To assist students in attaining a better understanding of new material, have them check “what they really know” about a topic before reading a passage. Use reading materials that connect students’ prior knowledge, experiences, and interests with what is being taught.

In order to activate background knowledge:

- Put students in interactive discussion formats so that their ideas and experiences come into direct contact with others.
- Bridge the gap between personal and text knowledge during activities and between home and school experiences, languages, and cultures.
- Understand and respect diversity.
- Instruct students on a moment-to-moment basis, responding to confusion and providing support on a continuing and evolving basis based on what students know and don’t know; using the discussion to make instructional decisions.



After the Test

Some students are just so thankful to have completed a test that they don’t ever want to see it again. However, it is important that students take time to review a returned test so they can learn more about what they need to do to be better prepared in the future. After the test is finished, students should spend time comparing how they did versus how they think they performed. Did they really spend enough time preparing for the test? Immediately after a test is the time to start thinking about the next test and what can be done to improve performance.

Students should keep all of the materials they used to prepare for the test until that test has been graded and returned. If there are mistakes or items of which the student is unsure, having those notes can make a difference in clearing up any problems or misconceptions.

Students should take time to review the results of their test and look for any patterns or specific problem areas. This will provide information that students can use before taking another test so they avoid repeating the same types of problems.

Students should analyze the test by looking at the types of questions that were asked and the format used for specific questions. This will provide clues for the format and content of future tests. Students should check to see if more test questions came from print material or from lectures and presentations. If the bulk of the material is covered during lectures, then students need to attend class every session and take good notes that can be used to more adequately prepare for future tests. Last but not least, if students missed specific questions and don't know why, they should talk with the instructor so they can get a clear understanding of what was wrong and how they should approach similar problems in the future.

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